

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 04118 261820Z

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSOCW 4118

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: ABLD, UR, US
SUBJECT: NEW EMBASSY COMPLEX MOSCOW

EYES ONLY ACTING DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY EAGLEBURGER FROM
AMBASSADOR

1. AS YOU KNOW, WE SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS IN DECEMBER, 1972, FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW EMBASSY BUILDINGS IN MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON. BOTH SIDES HAVE NOW PRESENTED PRELIMINARY ARCHITECTURAL PLANS FOR NEW COMPLEXES, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT, ON PRESENT ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE, IT WILL BE A YEAR OR MORE BEFORE OUR FINAL PLANS ARE READY AND PERHAPS THREE YEARS BEFORE CONSTRUCTION CAN ACTUALLY BE STARTED. I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR EXAMINING THE SITUATION TO SEE WHETHER THERE IS ANY WAY THAT THE PROCESS CAN BE ACCELERATED ON OUR PART.

2. I BELIEVE THIS MATTER REQUIRES YOUR URGENT ATTENTION, NOT MERELY BECAUSE THIS EMBASSY WILL BE UNABLE TO FULFILL ITS EXPANDED DUTIES ADEQUATELY UNTIL IT HAS A SUITABLE PHYSICAL PLANT, BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, BECAUSE A SLOWER PACE ON OUR PART THAN THAT SET BY THE SOVIETS CAN CREATE A SERIOUS POLITICAL IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS. THE 1972 AGREEMENT REQUIRES SIMULTANEOUS OCCUPANCY OF CHANCERIES, YET THE SOVIET PLANNING FOR THEIR PROJECT APPEARS TO BE FAR AHEAD OF OURS. THE PRINCIPLE OF SIMULTANEITY IS IMPORTANT TO US TO INSURE REASONABLE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR OUR PROJECT IN MOSCOW, BUT IF DELAYS ON OUR PART RESULT IN HOLDING UP THE SOVIET PROJECT IN WASHINGTON, THE ISSUE COULD TAKE ON MAJOR PROPORTIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 04118 261820Z

I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE THAT WE HAVE QUITE ENOUGH BILATERAL

PROBLEMS ON THE TABLE AS IT IS, AND WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO AVOID CREATING UNNECESAARY ONES.

3. THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSPECTORS WHO WERE HERE RECENTY EXAMINED THIS PROBLEM AND HAVE SUGGESTED THAT A SPECIAL TASK FORCE BE ESTABLISHED BY M TO COORDINATE AND ACCELERATE THE EMBASSY PROJECT. GIVEN THE SIZE OF THE PROJECT, ITS COMPLEXITY, THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS IT PRESENTS, AND ITS POLITICAL SENSITIVITY, I BELIEVE THAT SUCH A STEP WOULD BE MOST DESIREABLE, SINCE IT COULD PROVIDE AN INSTRUMENT OF MOVING THE PROJECT ALONG AS RAPIDLY AS IS PRUDENT AND IN FULL COORDINATION WITH THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE US GOVERNMENT WHO ARE INVOLVED.

4. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT JOHN THOMAS WOULD BE IDEALLY SUITED TO TAKE ON THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SUCH A TASK FORCE. IT SHOULD, IDEALLY, DRAW ITS MEMBERSHIP FROM THE VARIOUS USG OFFICES WITH A DIRECT INTEREST IN OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EMBASSY PROJECT. BESIDES FBO, THIS WOULD INCLUDE EUR/SOV AND EUR/EX (FOR ADVICE ON POLITICAL AND TACTICAL ASPECTS AND FOR EXPERTISE ON SOVIET CONDITIONS), OFFICES SUCH AS SY AND O/C, AND REPRESENTATION FROM THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY AND THE NSC. IN ADDITION, IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO INCLUDE A STAFFER OR TWO FROM OMB AND PERHAPS REPRESENTATION FROM THE STAFFS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES WHICH MUST APPROVE THE FUNDING. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE TASK FORCE WOULD BE MAXIMALLY EFFECTIVE IF A FULL-TIME EXECUTIVE SECRETARY COULD BE PROVIDED--PERHAPS SOMEONE BROUGHT IN FROM THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FOR THIS SPECIFIC JOB.

5. A TASK FORCE WILL NOT OF COURSE AUTOMATICALLY SOLVE THE PROBLEM, BUT I BELIEVE THAT IF IT IS PROPERLY CONSTITUTED AND GIVEN THE MANDATE TO MOVE AHEAD AS RAPIDLY AS SOUND PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICE ALLOWS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK SUBSTANTIALLY EARLIER THAN IS ANTICIPATED AT PRESENT AND THUS AVOID AN UNNECESSARY POLITICAL PROBLEM AS WELL AS THE INCREASED COSTS FUTURE INFLATION WILL IMPOSE. ASIDE FROM THIS, I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT AMERICAN ARCHITECTS, BUILDERS AND EVEN BUREAUCRATS ARE CAPABLE OF IMPLEMENTING A PROJECT AT LEAST AS RAPIDLY AS THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS CAN. SO FAR, I REGRET TO NOTE THAT THE COMPARISON IS NOT FLATTERING TO OUR SIDE.

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 04118 261820Z

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